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## Mythcon 51: The Mythic, the Fantastic, and the Alien

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### Additional Keywords

Poetry; A Prayer; The Red Shoes; Destiny Kinal

# A PRAYER FOR THOSE WHO INHERIT THE RED SHOES

by Destiny Kinal

We learn this grim lesson in nursery:  
Of many lost places, as many ways home.  
Always the crone, always the soldier;  
Girl child stands aloof, bound by curious  
Serpent, lifted high on loaves of bread  
Still tied to new red shoes, muddy now.

Her look of detachment hovers above the crone  
With enlarged lower lip commanding this room  
Beneath the swamp, room of bad dreams come  
True. Bent man with long nose and balding head  
Whispers to the hag. In corners, beaked Bosch  
Creatures squeak alarm like malignant hinges.

The gaze of serpent, tightening coils just enough  
To quicken breath, tells her all she needs to know.  
Does pride keep her eye dry and chin high? No,  
Ego fell with that sickening slide through swamp,  
And into that timeless room, where recognition  
Emptied her stomach onto blank shock of floor.

If you have never arrived in another reality  
Wide awake, you will not guess how truth  
Rose like a clear spring in that cold cellar  
To fill her with its silver sword as she met  
This tortured species and took their pain in.  
An older flame was born in her to tunnel out.

After all, they dispatched her with a curious curse:  
To dance forever, a sign against overreaching pride.  
And when her weary clogging brings her to the place  
Of salvation by the soldier, who severs the chattering  
shoes  
(The red shoes fused on her through seductive rhythm)  
We are not told how the story goes on. Nor if it ends.

After her stumps pump blood down marble church  
stairs,  
After the wolf is slain, with grandma undigested  
inside,  
After the room of straw is spun to gold and son  
returned,  
After nettles are stamped and worked into shirts to spell  
Bewitched brothers, how do these crippled woman (for  
Surely they are women now) find their way in this world

That bottoms out so glibly? Grimm offers scant  
homily  
To the fearful child: "Look without to find your magic  
To survive?" I offer you this living stone to swallow

As talisman against that time where we are tested.  
May daughters find courage and crones keep faith  
that he who tracks and hunts through time is snared.

